

TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Ziindaagan, Sunflower

Bopogimenh Giizis - Broken Snowshoe Moon (13th moon)

Anishinaabe and their Relationship with Sunflower ²

Sunflowers originated in south and central America, possibly the first plant to be cultivated in gardens. Sunflowers were an important food plant for many tribes, including the Anishinaabe people. Evidence indicates that sunflower domestication began 5,000 years ago. Since then, Indigenous farmers increased the size of sunflower seeds 1,000 percent through cultivation.

The Anishinaabe planted sunflowers on the north side of the Three Sisters garden, along with corn, beans, and squash. Some tribes refer to the sunflower as the 'fourth sister'. Sunflowers were used in many ways. Seeds were ground or pounded into flour for cakes, mush or bread. Sometimes seeds were mixed into the meal with other vegetables such as beans, squash, and corn. The seeds were often eaten for a snack, mixed with dried berries, like a trail mix. Seeds were used to make bread or eaten raw. There are references of squeezing the oil from the seed and using the oil in making bread. In addition to sunflower seeds, many other seeds were eaten or used in medicines. Pumpkin and squash seeds were an important part of the diet. Many other seeds were added to foods as well, flavoring and adding many nutritious benefits! (Photo Credit 27, Sunflowers)

Sunflower Today ²

The Spanish explorers brought sunflowers back to Europe. Sunflowers were first cultivated in Spain, and eventually grown in neighboring countries. Sunflower oil is one of the most popular oils in the world. Today, the leading commercial producers of sunflower seeds include the Russian Federation, Peru, Argentina, Spain, France and China.

Cherokee and their Relationship with Sunflower ¹¹

A quote from G. T. Garrett in his book, *The Cherokee Herbal: Native Plant Medicine from the Four Directions*, tells some of the relationship the Cherokee have with sunflower; "The East was considered an 'open door' the direction we are born into this life to meet the Sun. Conversely, the West, the direction of death and passing from this world to the netherworld of our ancestors, was considered the 'back door' with the spirit guides as the gatekeepers to the 'darkened land.' The sacred teachings express that life and death were experiences of the spirit moving through a doorway, from which we continue our journey, much like the sunflower, who turns its head following the sun as it moves from east to west across the sky."

